

HEROES OF THE FAITH, THEN AND NOW

Very Ordinary Gideon

TEXT: Heb. 11:32

Introduction: Right before the end of WW1 in 1919 a baby was born to a Presbyterian couple on a farm. The couple were faithful church goers and when their son was only five, his dad took him to hear a famous baseball player who had been saved and become a preacher. The boy was not all that impressed. He gave himself to the chores around the farm and as much hunting, fishing, and baseball as he could work in. By the time he was 15, this farm boy, though he still attended church with his parents, also had a touch of rebellion about him.

But that year, things begin to change. He went to a revival meeting, and on the fourth stanza of the invitation walked the aisle and trusted Christ as his Lord and Savior. He went to Florida for college and was baptized in a Southern Baptist Church. God called him to preach, but most of his preaching during his college years was on street corners and rescue missions. He moved to Illinois to further his theological education and pastored a Baptist church: United Gospel Tabernacle. During this time he met the daughter of missionaries to China and married her. While pastoring at Tabernacle, this now grown farm boy preacher hosted a Sunday night radio program called Songs in the Night. A close friend of his organized a ministry to try to reach high school students called Youth for Christ. The young preacher became the first employee of Youth for Christ and traveled across America and Europe, speaking and setting up chapters of the organization. Still, he was hardly known. In fact, how many of you know the man I am describing? You will all recognize him in a few moments.

In 1949, this preacher set up a tent in Los Angeles and drew 350,000 over a 25 day campaign to hear him preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The newspaper took such note of what was happening in L. A. that the name of the young evangelist spread like wildfire throughout the country. Before long Billy Graham was scheduling crusades in major cities across America and around the world. He helped begin the evangelical magazine called Christianity Today and the Christian Film Production Company, World Wide Films. Today he is known for having preached the gospel to more people than any other man in history - some 210 million souls. And every time he gave an invitation, the same song is always played: Just As I Am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me; and that Thou bidst me come to Thee; Oh Lamb of God, I come."

Listen! Here is what I want you to see. God took a very ordinary boy and transformed him to be the mighty man of God the Lord purposed him to be. The hero of the faith we are looking at in Hebrews 11 was just like that. His name was Gideon.

Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

Now for some reason, the author of Hebrews was in a hurry. He said he didn't have time to tell of Gideon. Well I do. And so do you, amen?

I. THE LIFE OF FAITH IS FOR ANYONE WHO WANTS IT.

A. We sometimes fail to identify with “heroes of the faith” because we are just ordinary people.

1. We think that they have something we do not.
2. That is not true. Each of the men and women of heroic faith listed here in Heb. 11, were just boys and girls, men and women just like you and me, with problems, and weaknesses, and sins, and frailties.

B. And such was Gideon.

1. Israel needed a leader, a judge, to deliver them from the oppression of the mighty Midianites.
2. **But Gideon was from the weakest of the clans.** (Judges 6:15)
3. **He was the youngest son.**
4. **He required a sign (6:17) to believe the Lord.** (fire from a staff to consume offering)
5. **When he tore down the altar of Baal, he did it at night because he was afraid.**
6. **Before he went to battle, he asked for a second sign - dew on fleece only.**
7. **Then he asked for a third sign - dew on ground only.**
8. **At this point, Gideon was not exactly a man of great faith.**

C. He began very ordinary; God made him extraordinary.

D. God does the same transforming work in the lives of all who surrender to Him in faith.

1. It does not mean He will make me a Billy Graham or you an army destroying Gideon.
2. It means God will make me all He ever intended Mike Claunch to be and God will make you all God purposed for you to be.

II. BEFORE ENTERING THE BATTLE OF THE LORD, TRUST IN OURSELVES MUST BE REDUCED.

A. Gideon’s army had to be properly sized. (7:1-7)

1. Midianite soldiers numbered 135,000.
2. Gideon started with 32,000.
3. God sent the fearful home. Down to 10,000.
4. God sent the cautious home. Kept the guzzlers; sent sippers home. Down to 300.
5. God said, “Now that’s about right.”

B. All talent and ability and every resource is from God.

**But God does not want us depending upon the resources,
God wants us to depend upon Him.**

III. GOD GIVES VICTORY HIS WAY, NOT OUR WAY.

- A. God's weapons: a torch, pitcher, and trumpet for every man
- B. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon"

CONCLUSION My friend, **The secret to seeing the kind of victories in your life that Gideon saw in his is two fold.**

1. **As an ordinary man or woman, boy or girl, trust the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.**
2. **Use every talent, every ability, every resource for Him,**
but do not depend upon your talents, abilities, and resources to deliver the victories.
Depend on Him.
Trust Him.
Follow Him.
Obey Him.

In just a little while, I am going to give those who have not yet come to Christ the opportunity to trust Him and let God begin to transform your ordinary life into the extraordinary life He created you to have.

But first I must speak to all of you who have already trusted the Lord to say to you that St. Andrew Baptist Church stands today in need of Gideon's band.

We are at war, not against the Midianites, or any human foe. We do not battle with flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of wickedness. We fight for the souls of men, not against them. But the war is as real as any war ever was and far more is at stake.

The present battle we fight you could call the Battle for the Bay. We have called the whole project **Embracing Bay** because in the month of September, we are going to **call 8,000 homes** in Panama City, invite them to church and a luncheon, and offer to pray with them. About **800** of those folks are going to share **prayer requests** with us. Those on the prayer teams will pray over that request the night it is received and will write the person a note telling them we have prayed. To do what I just described to you takes a team of about 125 people, and all or most of those are already enlisted.

But we do not just want to pray for those requests 1 time. We want to pray for them for the three weeks of our Embracing Bay project. And we do not have to come to church to pray for those requests. We can do that praying in our homes. We call these people home intercessors.

Here is the way it works. **A home intercessor picks up their prayer requests on Sunday** and takes them home. **For each prayer request, 3 post cards will be attached.** **The intercessor prays daily for each request** and near the end of the week **writes a**

post card to the person saying that I have been praying for you. The intercessor does this for **3 weeks**, for **4 to 8 requests**.

Guess how many of these we need? Somebody said 300.

No, we need **175**. So with the **+ 125** others that are already enlisted to lead other areas, make the calls, or be in one of the on site prayer teams, that makes a total of = **300!**

I am asking God to give us 175 home intercessors today to make our Gideon's band of 300 people to Embrace Bay County in prayer. I want those of you that are already a part of the 125, the Leadership Team, The Callers, The on site Prayer Teams, I want you to stand up and move out into the aisles. I want you to spread yourselves out as evenly as you can through every aisle of the church right now.

Now the rest of you members of SABC, I am asking you to commit today to join Gideon's band. (Guests, please just be patient with us for a minute while we do a little family business) I am asking you to let the postcard be your torch and the pen be your pitcher and say, "God, these are the tools you have put in my hand to deal defeat to my enemy and yours, the devil. I will use them to reach up to you in prayer and out to my community in love and look to you for victories that will be counted in eternity."

Now if you will be a part of this 300, I want you to take that green card sitting behind the offering envelope in the pew rack. Pick up a pencil and fill out that card saying you will be one of the home intercessors during the month of September. As soon as you fill out the card, stand up and pass it to someone in the aisle.

Prayer for Home Intercessors followed by invitation.